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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
40TH AEROSPACE RESCUE & RECOVERY SQUADRON (MAC)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96237



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: 400 (Major Lehman/2687)

17 June 1969

SUBJECT: Mission Narrative Report #2-3-038-16 June 1969

Classified by 23026P
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS.
DECLASSIFIED ON 31 Dec 75

TO: 3ARRGP (JSARC) *JS*
APO 96307

1. (U) This report is submitted in accordance with ARRS 3ARRGPSUP 1, dated 11 July 1969.

2. (C) JG 71 and 79 were standing strip alert at Tango 16 June 69. At 0238Z KING 1 ordered both aircraft to scramble for a downed F-105 call sign KINGFISH 01. Just prior to takeoff JG 71 and 79 were given the location of the survivor to be 108/58/113 (1852N 10357E). JG 71 and 79 launched at 0252Z and climbed to 7000 ft MSL on a direct course to the survivor. In route TACAN lock on was lost and vectors from ETHAN was received to the search location. Weather in route was broken cumulus clouds with tops 6000 ft to 7000 ft. JG 71 and 79 arrived in the search area at 0315Z. The survivor's chute had been spotted in a bamboo field near a river and village between two high mountainous areas. The bamboo was about 15 - 28 ft tall, so a landing was impossible. Tops of highest mountains were approximately 6500 ft and altitude of survivor's position was 1500 ft. Firefly 42 was on the scene and had received no beeper or voice contact. No ground fire had been received. KING 1 was on scene commander. JG 71 and 79 set up an orbit in the area at 7000 ft and above the clouds. Mountains were obscured by the broken clouds but a large hole was over the survivor's position. Bases of the clouds were approximately 4000 ft MSL. Some confusion on radio call signs were experienced due to the recent change of "KING" and "JACK", from "CROWN" and "COMPRESS". Radio discipline was very good and KING 1 coordinated all activities. At 0332Z Sandy 3 and 4 arrived on the scene and Sandy 3 was assigned on scene commander. At 0332Z voice contact was made with the survivor by firefly 42. The survivor reported he was injured seriously and requested immediate pickup. At 0335Z the area was confirmed friendly by Blue Chip. JG 71 started down for the pickup and maneuvered over a Karst area to jettison external fuel tanks. Tanks were jettisoned at 0336Z. Decent was continued and JG 71 arrived in hover near the survivor at 0345Z and lowered A1C Sopata, Pararescueman (PJ).

just as we said!

not normal

GROUP 4
Downgraded at 3 years
After 3 years, declassified
after 14 years

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The PJ was put on the ground about 50 feet from the survivor as rotor down wash was blowing the survivor's chute. The survivor's beacon came on at this time. The beacon was a hindrance to communications between the PJ and the aircraft. The PJ and aircraft switched to 282.8 for communications, and no contact was established on 282.2, so guard was again selected. The PJ was instructed to turn off the beacon. The beacon was coming from the parachute pack and due to the survivor's condition, the PJ delayed turning off the beacon until he could do so without further injuring the survivor. At 0350Z the PJ requested a stokes litter which was lowered. The survivor had suspected two broken legs and a broken arm. The first PJ had difficulties in placing the survivor in the litter because of the multiple injuries, so at 0353Z the second PJ (TSgt Willis) was lowered to assist. At 0359Z the aircraft was called back in over the survivor and the survivor was on board at 0402Z. The hoist was lowered and both PJs were recovered on the forest penetrator at 0404Z. Survival radios, URC 64, beacon URT 27 and the seat kit was dropped as the hoist was raised. JG 71 departed the area without incident and RTB to Ch 70 escorted by Sandies 3 and 4 and KING 1 for A/R if required. JG 79 returned to Tango. A/R was not required. JG 71 landed at Ch 70 at 0455Z terminating the mission. There was negative battle damage.

3. (U) The name of the survivor was: JAMES L. DEVCSS,
1/Lt, USAF, 354TFS, APO 96273.

4. (U) The rescue crews were:

Jolly Green 71 (LOW)

AC: Major William B. Lehman,

CP: Capt James P. O'Pry,

FE: TSgt Howard M. Lord,

RS: TSgt Lorenzo E. Willis,

RS: A1C Ronald F. Sopata,

AP: A1C Timothy J. Monk,

ACM (FE): AE2 (NAVY) B. Childer

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Jolly Green 79 (HIGH)

AC: Capt John H. Hartman,

CP: Capt Gerald E. McCullough,

FE: SSgt Aron P. Hodges,

RS: TSgt Donald R. Snyder,

RS: Sgt Michael Fish,

ACM (RS) HM-1, H. G. Mills (NAVY)

William B. Lehman
WILLIAM B. LEHMAN, Major, USAF
Aircraft Commander

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S.D. 17

102.

39th ARRSq History, Apr - Jun 69

Date: 16 June 1969

Mission Number: 2-3-038-16 Jun 69

Flight Designation: King 1

Distressed Aircraft: Kingfish Lead (F-105)

Location: 106/62/113 (C)

Saves: 1, combat

1. (U) At 0230Z, King 1 received a Mayday call from Kingfish 03 stating that Kingfish Lead was hit by ground fire and the flight of four F-105s was proceeding to Channel 70, Kingfish Lead then reported having control problems and was unable to maintain level flight. He bailed out at 106/62/113. Time of bail out was 0235Z. Kingfish 02 reported good chute and was following it down. Kingfish 03 orbited high and Kingfish 04 departed for tanker. Kingfish 01 landed in a safe wooded bamboo area and Kingfish 02 had the chute pinpointed. Ethan had radar point and good position of the survivor also. JGs 71/76 were immediately launched from LS 98 and Sandys 1/2/3/4 were launched from Channel 89. Ethan vectored Fireflies 42/43 into the area and Cricket provided Raven 46 as FAC.

2. (U) Kingfish 02 reported that the area looked safe with negative activity and that he had negative radio contact with the survivor. Kingfish 02 and 03 cycled to tanker at this time. Fastmovers were requested. Muskrat and Vampire flights were supplied. Tiger 03, fastmover FAC, was also sent to the area.

3. (U) Upon arrival in the area, Fireflies 42/43 trolled for ground fire and received negative results. They searched for the chute but were unable to locate it until Kingfish 02 returned and pinpointed the survivor. Firefly 42 attempted contact with the survivor but received negative response. Sandys 3/4 arrived in the area and Sandy 3 was designated as OSC. The JGs were holding at 106/60/113. The Sandys were advised not to fire weapons unless fired upon first. Sandys 3/4 and Fireflies 42/43 trolled for ground fire and the area seemed deserted.

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103.

39th ARRSq History, Apr - Jun 69

Firefly 42 established radio contact with the survivor and learned that the survivor was hurt bad and would require immediate pick up. Sandy 3 pinpointed the survivor and sent the Fireflys to escort the JGs to the area. A PJ was standing by to go down and assist the survivor. When JG 71 arrived in the area, Sandys and Fireflys flew a daisy chain and the PJ was lowered. At this time, Sandys 1/2 arrived in the area and held clear.

4.(U) The PJ needed the Stokes Litter since the man had two broken legs and a broken arm. A second PJ was lowered to assist. One of the PJs advised that it would take about ten minutes to get the survivor set up in the litter. Sandys 1/2 replaced the Fireflys at this time. The survivor was brought up to the JG on the litter at 0403Z and then the PJs were lifted on the penetrator. The SAR forces were released at 0405Z. JG 71 proceeded to Channel 70 with the survivor. Sandys 3/4 escorted JG 71 to Channel 70. JG 76 returned to LS 98 with Sandys 1/2 escorting.

5.(U) Problem area:

a. Kingfish 02 called for Crown on 243.0 and King 1 answered with the correct call sign three times without an answer. King 1 then went to the old Crown 1 call sign and Kingfish 02 then answered. Suggest the new rescue call sign "KING" vice "CROWN" be reiterated to units throughout SEA.

6.(U) King 1 Crewmembers:

- a. AC Captain Howes
- b. CP Captain DiCamillo
- c. CP 1Lt Urbach
- d. NN Captain Mitchell
- e. RO TSgt McCormack
- f. FE MSgt Mathews

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56 Special Operations Wing

SAR Report (Kingfish 01) (U)

3 AARG (3C)

1. (S) Kingfish 01 bailed out at 106/62/channel 113 at 09350 on 16 June 1969. The UTM coordinates were UF 710957.

2. (C) Sandy 01/02/03/04 were scrambled immediately. Sandy 01/02 were airborne at 1000G.

3. (C) The survivor was located in heavy elephant grass in a valley which was completely surrounded by high, steep karst. There was a river about 500 meters north and east and a deserted village on the other side of the river. The weather was broken to overcast, and layered from the surface to 8000' MSL with scattered buildups to about 18,000' MSL. Fortunately there was a break in the overcast about 2 miles in diameter around the survivor.

4. (S) A Kingfish wingman was first on scene and had observed a good chute. However he could not establish radio contact with Kingfish 01. Firefly 42/43 were diverted to the scene to aid in the rescue. Upon arrival Firefly 42 assumed on scene command. He could not establish radio contact with Kingfish 01. Jolly Green 71/76 had scrambled from Lima Site 98 and were enroute to the area. Raven 46 was also working nearby and came to the area to offer assistance. Due to erroneous vectors, Sandy 01/02 were off course and Sandy 03/04 were close to the area when radio contact was established with Kingfish 01. His injuries were two broken legs and a broken arm. He therefore requested an immediate pickup. Sandy 03 was given on scene command about 5 miles from the area. Firefly 42 had made several trolling passes around the survivor with no ground fire observed and Raven 46 advised that this was a permissive area. Based upon that information, Sandy 03 directed Firefly 42/43 to escort Jolly Green 71 into the survivor and make the pickup. Sandy 03/04 arrived at the scene and flew cover for Jolly Green 71 just as he began his hover over the survivor. Firefly 42/43 then departed for NKP. Sandy 01/02 arrived shortly behind Sandy 03/04 and four ship daisy chain was maintained around the helicopter until the egress. Two pararescuemen were lowered to assist the survivor into a Stokes litter which was taken aboard the helicopter at 1100G. Egress was to the northwest up a valley and into the clouds. Sandy 01/02 then escorted Jolly Green 79 back to Lima Site 98, while Sandy 03/04 escorted Jolly Green 71 to the fence. Jolly Green 71 recovered at CH 70 and Sandy 03/04 RTB'd CH 89.

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5. (S) Some confusion occurred during the SAR because of the recent change in call signs from "Crown" to "King". It became necessary to revert to the "Crown" call sign in order to raise some SAR participants.

6. (U) Sandy Force participating in this effort were as follows:

Sandy 01 - Capt Robert W. Keith
Sandy 02 - 1/Lt William B. Atkinson Jr.
Sandy 03 - 1/Lt Jon W. Ewing
Sandy 04 - Major Robert L. Bohan

SIGNED

DAHYLE E. TRIPP, Lt Colonel, USAF
Ass't Deputy Commander for Operations
Sandy Coordinator

GROUP 4

Downgraded at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 12 years

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15.

39th ARRSq History, Apr - Jun 69

A total of 8 crewmen were lost in this tragic event.¹¹

On 5 June, under the new call sign of King, the 39th ARRS responded to a Mayday call addressed to Crown. An RF-4C, call sign Taksan, had been hit by ground fire while on a reconnaissance mission over the North and had turned out over the water prior to bailout. Jolly Green 35 was on an established orbit near the scene and while fastmovers flew MIGCAP, Jolly Green 35 picked up both survivors and brought the more seriously injured survivor to a navy hospital ship. The survivors were in the water for approximately 30 minutes prior to their rescue.¹²

(U) The Crown call sign was not quickly replaced by King. Even as the quarter closed distress crew members were calling Crown for emergency assistance.¹³

On 16 June, King 1 was on an inland precautionary orbit when Kingfish Lead, An F-105, ejected over hostile territory. Kingfish 02 advised King 1 that Lead had been hit by ground fire. The SAR forces were launched by King 1 and proceeded to the scene. Kingfish 02 advised King 1 that he had position of survivor pinpointed but that he had to go to tanker.

11. S.D. 14 Narrative, Mission 1-3-054-18 May 69, p. 96
12. S.D. 15 Narrative, Mission 1-3-058-5 Jun 69, p. 99
13. S.D. 16 3 ARNGp Msg, 120900Z Jul 69, p. 101

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16.

39th ARRSq History, Apr - Jun 69

Firefly 42/43 were vectored to the area while Raven 46 was designated On Scene Commander. The area was trolled by the Fireflys (A-1s) to locate ground fire; fortunately there was none. Sandy 03/04 arrived on scene and Sandy 03 took over as OSC. Firefly 42 managed to establish voice contact with the survivor who stated he was badly hurt. Jolly Green 71 was vectored in and pararescuemen were lowered with a stokes litter. The survivor was administered first aid and then picked up by JG 71.¹⁴

(U) King 7, the alert crew at Tuy Hoa AB, was launched to rendezvous with Jolly Green 28/21 and escort them to a surface vessel with a crewman suffering from an acute appendicitis. The rendezvous with the ship was made and the patient was picked up with a stokes litter and taken to the U.S. Air Force hospital at Cam Ranh Bay. Both Jolly Greens were air refueled by King 7 enroute.¹⁵

 King 2 was on precautionary inland orbit when a Mayday call was picked up from a Warpaint 501 who stated that Wolf 05, an F-4, had been shot down and both crewmen had

14. S.D. 17 Narrative, Mission 2-3-038-16 Jun 69, p. 102

15. S.D. 18 Narrative, Mission 1-3-064-23 Jun 69, p. 105

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- 11 (S) Search and rescue effort for Manual 42A was successful.
- 15 (U) Munition's loading crews were consolidated under 456th Munitions Maintenance Squadron..
- 15 (S) Maj. James B. East Jr., 602nd Special Operations Squadron, declared MIA.
- 17 (S) Search and rescue effort for Cobalt 01 Bravo was successful.
- 22 (U) The 56th Special Operations Wing assumed main support base supply responsibility for OV-10 aircraft.
- June 2 (C) Thai Guard accidentally killed when a bunker collapsed.
- 7 (U) Civic Action Center quick reaction mobile medical team deployed to Ubon, Thailand in response to reported cholera epidemic.
- 9 (S) A-1H #52-135356 crashed on takeoff, killing the pilot.
- 13 (S/NF) Aircraft of Detachment 1, 56th Special Operations Wing, received hits during hostile action. The RLAF pilot died during attempted crash landing.
- 13 (U) Col. Thomas B. Carter assumed command of 56th Combat Support Group.
- 13 (S) 1st Lt. Neal C. Ward, 602nd Special Operations Squadron, declared MIA.
- 14 (S) Search and rescue effort for Wolf 05B was successful and search and rescue effort for Wolf 05A was partially successful.
- 16 (S) Search and rescue effort for Kingfish 01 was successful.
- 20 (M) The rapid area supply support (RASS) team number 118 was terminated at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB.

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(3) After arriving on scene, Sandys 01, 02, 03 and 04 found the survivor's location was in a heavily forested area, one kilometer south of Route 23. The ground rose sharply into a high karst area, and was covered by a jungle canopy. Neither ground fire nor defenses of any type were noted in the immediate area.

(S) While the Sandys were in route to the scene Nail 19 was on-scene commander, and directed Pony Express 12 and 10. Pony Express 12 made a successful pickup of Wolf 05B, but the hoist cable jammed. This necessitated flying the survivor to a level area and landing the helicopter to get him inside.

(S) Pony Express 10 picked up Wolf 05A. After the hoist was lowered to Wolf 05A, who extended the seats and waved to be hoisted, the aircraft main rotor contacted some vines and a vibration accompanied by smoke ensued. When Wolf 05A had cleared the trees, the hoist operator observed that the chest strap had not been secured. Ten feet below the helicopter door, Wolf 05A apparently lost his grip and fell 350-500 feet to the ground. Inspection of the penetrator showed that the chest strap had not been opened or used.

(S) A successful SAR effort was conducted for Kingfish 01, an F-105, on 16 June. The survivor was located in heavy elephant grass in a valley completely surrounded by a high, steep karst. There was a river about 500 meters north and east and a deserted village on the other side of the river.

(S) A Kingfish wingman was first on scene and had observed

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a good chute. However he could not establish radio contact with Kingfish 01. Firefly 42/43 were diverted to the scene to aid the rescue and upon arrival Firefly 42 assumed on-scene command.

(S) Sandy 01/02 were off course and Sandy 03/04 were close to the area when radio contact was established with Kingfish 01. His injuries were two broken legs and a broken arm. He therefore requested immediate pickup. Sandy 03 was given on-scene command about five miles from the area. Firefly 42 made several trolling passes with no ground fire observed. Based upon that information, Sandy 03 directed Firefly 42/43 to escort Jolly Green 71 to the survivor and make the pickup. Two pararescuemen were lowered and assisted the survivor into a Stokes litter which was taken aboard the helicopter. Egress was to the northwest up the valley and into the clouds.

(S) During Wing SAR efforts, it was found that CBU-19¹¹ could be used successfully in the following situations:

(1) CBU-19 could be used on enemy gun or troop concentrations when the enemy was not equipped with masks or other protective equipment. In these areas it was more efficient to disable the enemy temporarily than to employ normal weapons.

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Legacy

THANKS FOR MY EVERYTHING

James L. (Jim) DeVoss, 1/Lt, USAF
(Ret.)



"Party flight suits" were worn to squadron mates' end of tour celebrations. I didn't make mine, but I'm told my mates were able to hold one in my honor--thanks to those who risked their lives and got me out!

For over 32 years I have been telling groups of one or more a story at every opportunity. On December 10, 2001, I had my most recent and greatest opportunity to tell the story. Appropriately, it was modified from the "civilian" version in which I focus more on training before, rather than on my life and accomplishments after, being shot down during the Vietnam War. The audience on that date was the most special group of people I have ever had the privilege to address. The group was comprised of individuals just like you--SOF medical professionals, those who serve that others may live. Like June 16, 1969, I will remember December 10, 2001, for the rest of my life.

THE SHOOTDOWN

From the first time I heard and saw an airplane soar overhead, I had the desire to fly. This desire grew as I grew up, while I attended middle school, high school, and, ultimately, college at the University of Michigan. My bachelor's degree was one of the requirements for entering the Air Force's Officer Training School (OTS). Following OTS, I entered the Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) Program.

The training I had was standard to UPT. In extreme summary, we were taught that whenever we got into a cockpit and situated ourselves--setting all the fittings, harness, lapbelt, oxygen connection, anti-G suit connection, etc.--we were never, ever "strapping in" to the aircraft. Rather, we were strapping the aircraft on. When an aircraft is strapped on,

it is part of you, always doing what you want it to (provided, of course, its systems allow). If you are ever strapped into an aircraft, there is always the likelihood that, one day, one time, it could do what it wanted--with you merely as a passenger.

We always realized an aircraft and any of its systems could break--at any time. Thus, a critical and extensive part of our training was recognizing emergencies and, even more importantly, recovering from them. Recovery ranged from (1) fixing the challenge and continuing the mission to (2) continuing the mission, if possible, with something broken to (3) terminating the mission and landing as soon as practical if the challenge precluded continuing a safe, mission-fulfilling flight. Ultimately, "recovery" could entail having to leave the aircraft as soon as we recognized the challenge was so severe as to preclude getting the aircraft on the ground, safely or otherwise. Recovery, in that instance, was utilizing the ejection seat to maximize the probability of escaping with minimal or no injury. After ejection training, we were trained to get on the ground safely and survive no matter where we went down, even if in enemy territory.

Near the end of my UPT program, we were given the opportunity to array the selection of aircraft for which pilots were needed. Naturally, we ordered our preferences from the aircraft we most wanted to fly to the aircraft we least wanted to fly. The F-105 Thunderchief, affectionately known as the "Thud"--and one of only two single-seat fighters available at the time--had always been my goal. It led my list. Fortunately, pilots were needed to fly it.

More fortunately, I had done well enough throughout UPT to get to fly it. That led to 120 more flight hours preparing for combat. Suffice it to say that throughout that training, too, recognizing and recovering from emergency situations was a continual emphasis, especially given our next assignment would be flying combat missions with an operational squadron.

Every second of all that recognition and recovery training was put into action on June 16,



F-105 Thunderchief- The Thud. "The biggest, badest, fastest fighter that's ever flown." (Jim's personal opinion)

1969. I was on my 71st mission, flying as Kingfish 1, leader of a flight of four Thuds. We were fragged to work with a Forward Air Controller (FAC) who would locate and have us put our ordnance onto suspected "truck parks" along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Northern Laos. I had made only one pass on such a park when enemy guns came up. All of the rest of our ordnance was expended on the 37 and 57mm gun sites that had begun shooting at us.

While pulling off my last pass and calling for my wingmen to join on my aircraft to head for the post-strike tanker, things began to happen in the cockpit. Namely, my emergency panel lit up like a Christmas tree. I had taken sufficient hits to, among other things, knock out my aircraft's hydraulic systems--all three of them. Instead of the 3,000 PSI hydraulic pressure needed to move the Thud's flight control systems, my aircraft had zero. There were a number of other things going wrong, too, but the loss of hydraulic pressure was the most critical.

As the pressure went to zero, I initiated the slab-lock procedure by flipping a switch that caused a big vice grips-type device to grab and hold fixed the bar connecting the two sides of the elevator (the horizontal sections of the tail). Supposedly, this procedure would allow the aircraft to maintain straight and level flight-allowing me to egress the target/enemy territory-at an "equilibrium" airspeed of approximately 400 knots. Because the aircraft was going faster than 400 when I locked in the slab, it initially started climbing-trading airspeed for altitude while attempting to get to 400. When it reached 400, my Thud did start to level off. Naturally, it didn't get

level at exactly 400, a bit under actually, so it should have started a slight descent to again trade altitude for increasing airspeed.

What happened, however, was the aircraft attempted to maintain the altitude at which it had leveled off. Almost immediately I observed that I lacked the power to maintain altitude and airspeed. Given that my Thud was maintaining altitude, speed immediately bled off. Within seconds I had to be most concerned about the aircraft going

below stall speed and into a spin. To preclude this for as long as possible, I blew off all the external stores to lighten the load and reduce drag. When that happened, instead of slowing down less rapidly, the nose of the aircraft merely fell, and she started towards the ground, rapidly accelerating-with me strapped in.

Initially, my only thought was back to what we had been told in training: "If your butt is more than one-half inch out of the seat when you initiate the ejection system, the force of its explosion will drive the seat into your butt with sufficient force to compress your spine, causing at least paralysis and most probably death!" When the aircraft nosed over, a force of 3 negative Gs hit me. Compare that, if you will, to the first downward motion of a roller coaster. In that situation, riders experience about one-half of a positive G. At 3 negative Gs, I found myself pushed out of the seat, and I knew there were inches between my butt and it. And the aircraft was accelerating like a rocket towards the ground. Bottom line, by the time (1) I had mentally gone over all procedures confirming I had done them all and (2) the aircraft had stabilized into its dive (so that negative G forces were as low as they were going to get and I was as firmly in the seat as I was going to get), the aircraft had accelerated to at least 600 knots. The thoughts in my mind by then were two: (1) ejection at speeds in excess of 500 knots are always lethal and (2) if I don't get out of this alive, my wife is going to kill me!

A standard ejection from a Thud goes as follows: You grab one or both of the ejection handles located to the outside of each knee. Raising them causes the triggers directly under the handles

to spring down. Squeezing one or the other or both of the triggers first causes the canopy to unlock and be blown from the aircraft by the slipstream. Two-tenths of a second later, an explosive charge equivalent to five pounds of TNT goes off, starting the seat up the rails on which it is positioned to give it an upward trajectory. Once the seat has moved 8 inches, a lanyard is pulled that fires a rocket on the back of the seat. That rocket is capable of pushing 400 pounds (the pilot and the seat) 250 feet into the air. That allows clearance over the tail plus allows for a zero airspeed/zero altitude ground ejection should that ever be required. One second after the rocket fires, three things happen simultaneously. First, the lapbelt and shoulder harness are explosively blown apart. Second, take-up reels at the front of the seat and the top of the back of the seat spin in opposite directions causing a strap connecting the two to become taut, thus pitching the pilot out of the seat. Third, a small drogue parachute is blown out of the back of the seat. That drogue chute slows the seat, completing man/seat separation and preventing the seat from tumbling into the pilot. One second after those three things happen, another small drogue chute is blown from the pilot's parachute pack. This catches in the wind and immediately deploys the main parachute. From rocket fire to parachute deployment, the pilot is fully suspended in a canopy within 3.2 seconds.

The ejection system in my crippled Thud worked perfectly; less than one second after I pulled the triggers, the charge under the seat went off. Although I was in the seat as tight as I could be, my spine was still compressed, much like a diver's is if he attempts a dive into too shallow a body of water and his head hits the ground. Not too long ago, 32 years after my butt and the seat had their troublesome experience, I had x-rays done before a medical exam. Before I entered the exam room, the doctor greeted my wife, and his first question was, "How long has it been since your husband has been able to walk? When was his diving accident?" What they told us in class was true!

The real challenge, however, beyond the tenuous connection between the seat and I, was the estimated 600 knots of airspeed to which my Thud had accelerated during the time necessary for me to be able to get down onto the seat as best I could. As the seat and I started out of the cock-

pit, the 600-knot windblast initially hit my head and shattered my visor, blowing pieces of it back into my face, causing a number of cuts. The windblast then hit my oxygen mask. At speeds over 500 knots the deadly concern is the mask being blown off and the windblast entering the nose so rapidly it over-expands the lungs, causing the lungs to rupture and the pilot to bleed to death. In my case, however, my face must have been positioned directly into the wind because the mask was driven straight back. It was driven back hard enough, however, that even the soft, pliable rubber at the top of the mask blackened both of my eyes and, at the bottom, cut into my neck.

As the seat and I continued up, the windblast next hit my shoulders and drove them both backwards, causing them to separate. Then the wind caught my arms. In the Thud's seat, there were small devices designed to catch the pilot's elbows so that the forearms were tucked into the stomach area. My right arm did tuck, but the left was pushed outward and then flailed behind the seat. That flailing against the back of the seat shattered the upper arm bone, shattered the elbow, broke both bones of the forearm, and also several bones in the hand. When the windblast hit my abdominal area, it pushed my torso backwards. With my thighs on the seat, both of my hips were separated. As the seat and I fully exited the cockpit, the windblast finally hit the tops of my boots. The 14 G ejection force caused them both to point straight down and the windblast caused them to tuck under the seat. This caused both of my knees to separate. Surgeons later told me that the right knee was separated to one-eighth of an inch to being "chicken leg torn from chicken thigh"-everything in the knee was completely torn apart with only one nerve, one blood vessel, and the skin around it holding the lower leg on. I am sure this was an exaggeration, but obviously there was considerable damage. As for the left knee, it was in similar shape, but while everything else was ripped apart, the patellar tendon was only torn three-quarters through. Unfortunately, though, I must have done a really lousy PLF (parachute landing fall), as the bones in my lower leg were broken when I hit the ground. Finally, I landed in a patch of bamboo, impaling myself on some of the younger shoots.

So when I hit the ground, my shoulders, hips, and knees were separated; many bones in my body were shattered and broken; and my face and

My PJ's Partner won the 1st (last) First PJ's down the cable went down
in thick bamboo.

neck were bleeding. I landed over 130 miles behind enemy lines, well north in Laos--south of the "fishes' mouth" and East of the Plaine des Jars. I was actually closer to Hanoi than to friendly territory. We had been told during the intelligence briefing before the flight that we were "doing such a good job of halting the flow of military supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail that, if we went down and they couldn't walk us to a POW camp, they would stick a knife in us rather than waste a bullet." In the briefing, that sounded good. On the ground and in my condition, it didn't.

Despite my broken limbs and bloody body, I felt relatively calm (adrenaline is AMAZING!). My three wingmen were overhead and I thought I was doing a pretty good job of keeping conscious. Most importantly, from participating in ResCaps myself, I knew that everything literally came to a halt when a pilot was down, with whatever it took ready, willing, and able to do the necessary to "make the save."

And make the save they did. My three wingmen stayed overhead and other flights of two and four stayed on standby in case they were needed. Indeed, things did come "to a halt" until I had been successfully rescued. Most importantly, an Air Rescue and Recovery Service task force of two Jolly Green Giant helicopters and four A1E Skyraider Sandies came to get me. Upon entering the area, the Sandies first dragged the area, flying low and slow, doing all they could to entice any enemy in the area to shoot so they could wipe them out before the slower, and even more vulnerable, Jollies came in. When the area was deemed reasonably clear, a Jolly came in, hovering while lowering one PJ. While he stayed on the ground determining a second PJ was necessary to pick me off the bamboo and put me in a litter, the Jolly stayed close by, in harm's way, awaiting his evaluation. Once the evaluation was relayed, the crew again put themselves directly over me while the litter and the second PJ were lowered. The two PJs picked me straight up off the bamboo and gently placed me in the litter. The Jolly then returned and pulled us all out of enemy territory. Never once, in 70 previous missions, did I spend so much time directly over enemy territory! Yet, they did it freely, as part of their job, to get me out. They risked everything for me.

I am convinced it was the initial, skillful stabilizing of my limbs accomplished by the PJs

during the 90 minutes it took to get back to Udorn that allowed me to recover so successfully. Once at Udorn, I was immediately put into an ambulance to head for the hospital. This despite my loudly verbalized desires to stay for the end-of-tour celebration for the PJ--T/Sgt. Lorenzo (don't call me Lorenzo, my name is "Tony") Willis--who had been the first at my side deep within enemy territory.

THE RECOVERY

When I hit the Udorn "hospital," I was checked over and declared to be in mild acute distress and in severe need of orthopedic surgery. I was later told that when the base commander learned of this--and the fact that there was no orthopedic surgeon in Thailand at the time--he fragged in the soonest available aircraft capable of transporting me to the USAF Medical Center at Clark AFB in the Philippines. That aircraft was a C-141! I clearly remember being in a litter at the base of the flight deck bulkhead and being able to look towards the tail of the aircraft and see nothing but the nurse who attended me on the flight from Udorn to Clark. That huge airplane, just for me.

On June 17, the day after the shootdown, a medical team operated on me to repair my left upper arm and right knee. Twice during that surgery, while my brain was anesthetized, my body quit on them. But they didn't quit on me--they brought me back both times. They also decided that to continue to try and repair the left knee was inappropriate, and waited a week to perform the second surgery. Once again, during that repair, my body quit on them. For the next 2 weeks, it was touch-and-go; most of the medical staff was convinced I wasn't going to make it. Over the following 8 weeks, the doctors eventually agreed I would make it, but, because of the extent of my injuries, I would never walk again. During that 10-week period, I was airlifted from Clark through Japan to Scott AFB and then to the AF Medical Center at Wright-Patterson AFB. There they replaced the original casts put on after surgery and sent me home for a month of R&R. Throughout, my care was constant and professional.

At Wright-Patterson the first week of September, Major LeGalle, the head nurse of the Orthopedic ward, came into my room. The Major was one very unique lady. To this day I feel her twin sister must have been Nurse Kratchet in One

Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. She ruled the Orthopedic Ward with an iron fist, but, believe me, it was necessary to keep us broken but not sick guys from terrorizing her staff at every opportunity. Deep down, I knew she was devoted, professional, and extremely caring.

Upon entering my room for the first time, she announced, "Lieutenant, you stink!" "Ma'am, when you spend 10 weeks half plastered, well, half in plaster, that happens!" I replied. She gave directions to have my leg casts removed so I could be given my first real bath in 10 weeks! Unfortunately, only bivalving of the casts occurred that day. More unfortunately, when my legs were picked up out of the bottom halves of the casts, I could see what had happened to them while they were in the casts.

While convalescing at home as well as in the hospital, I had been doing hundreds of leg lifts a day. I thought that when the casts came off, I would hit the ground running, back to join my squadron and complete my tour. When I saw my atrophied legs, I began to wonder if what was being said about my never being able to walk again was true. About 3 am the next morning, during a sleepless night, my concern overcame common sense. The cast pieces had merely been taped together because, again, there had not been time for a bath the previous evening. I undid the tape, removed the cast tops, and swung my legs over the side of the bed. There was zero range of motion in both, and the right was bent backward 5 degrees at the knee. Nonetheless, I grabbed the back of the bedside chair with my good right hand and stood up. At that moment, I had to know if I could stand on my own two feet. When I found I could, I pushed the chair ahead of me and shuffled across the room and back. It was only later that I realized I had done the most stupid thing I could have done--what would have happened had my legs given out, either knee had twisted, or I had fallen over onto my left arm?

But none of that happened. The next morning I did the second most stupid thing: I told my wife what I had done. She immediately told Major LeGalle. Within minutes the major was in my room with a gurney. She picked me up (my weight was 175 when I was shot down; now--well, when next I stood on a scale--I was at 123), put me on it, and then pushed me into a small treatment room. There she gave me a 5-minute lecture on stupidity

and finished with the ultimate threat to a fighter pilot: "Lieutenant, anyone who does something that dumb belongs in Pediatrics!" She left and my wife had to retrieve me from the treatment room.

I finally had a bath and then later that day a corpsman came into the room asking, "Are you Lt Dumbdumb?" He must have been talking with Major LeGalle. He put me in a wheelchair, gave my wife directions, and told her to pack me up. Admittedly, I wondered if we were going to the Pediatric ward. The directions, however, led us off base and I wondered if Major LeGalle had somehow gotten me discharged. Thankfully, the directions then led us back on base and to a Quonset hut. Inside we were told to wait in a curtained area. Soon a gentleman in a white coat came in, and he, also, inquired if I was Lt Dumbdumb. I replied, "I guess so, who are you?" His response was, "I am the brace man. Major LeGalle said that if you were going to do it, we are going to make sure you do it right!"

I was measured for leg braces then and there. The very next morning they were delivered to the hospital and fitted to my atrophied legs. That afternoon I was sent to Physical Therapy. There I was introduced to two corpsmen therapists who said they were going to bend me, and I should tell them when it hurt. I asked if they would know if they were about "to hurt it." When they responded in the affirmative, I kindly asked that they "stop just short of hurting it, and let's not worry about hurting me." My wife used to say I would return from the twice-daily sessions with my whole body looking that pale yellowish-green color you see just before a bruise completely heals. My wife was a saint throughout my recovery; she was by my side in the hospital whenever she could be throughout each and every day. At night she stayed in base housing, alone. I am convinced the support and encouragement she gave me was every bit as important as the professional care bestowed upon me by the medical professionals.

Although the initial physical therapy was most uncomfortable, things did get better. Once I regained some flexibility, another therapist--whom I called the "nerve lady"--was assigned to me. In addition to being a therapist, she was also Miss Wright-Patterson 1969. She was about five feet four inches tall with long blonde hair and deep blue eyes. She was beautiful. And did she ever stimulate me! Admittedly, however, to this day I wish that

just once she had not used electricity to do it! The results of the continuous medical, therapeutic, and personal attention resulted in my being placed on Temporary Duty Retirement List (TDRL) status, admittedly under a 100% disability rating, just over 6 months after being shot down. Although I had leg braces on both legs and the fingers of my left hand were suspended in a contraption we called a monkey swing, I left the hospital able to get on with the rest of my life.

The care didn't stop, though. Using benefits under the GI Bill, I earned an MBA. Twelve months after first being put on TDRL, I went back to Wright-Patterson for re-evaluation. Physicians, nurses, and specialists continued to look after me to assure there was

no deterioration in my condition. Instead of deterioration, the evaluation confirmed nerve regeneration would allow me to get rid of the short brace on my left leg. Then, at the 24-month evaluation, a physician found that one of the tendons in my right knee had somehow reattached along the

interior side. He felt that if it were again severed and relocated to the lower front of the knee, I could possibly get rid of the right full-length brace. He went on to say that chances were one in a million and even if it did work, I would have to exercise and maintain condition for the rest of my life--but, but, but. It was obvious he wanted to try the surgery, but it was just as obvious he had extreme doubts about whether the tendon could stay attached to what basically amounted to scar tissue.

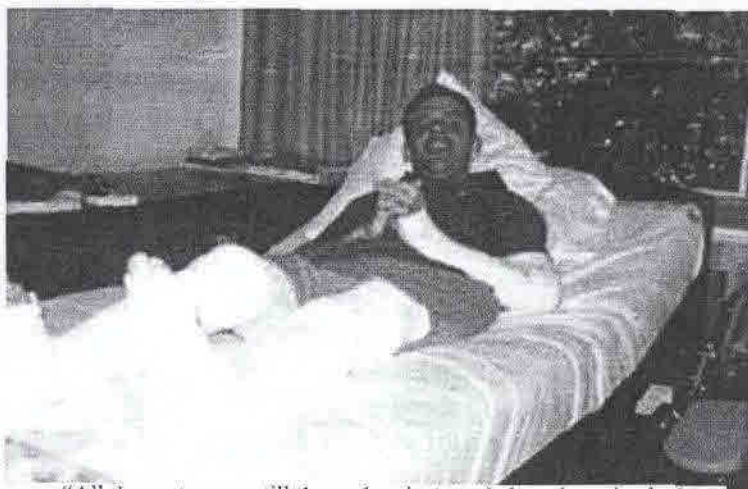
Regardless, he was telling me about the possibility of not having to strap in to what I had come to call my "leg iron" just to walk around every day. Therefore, I asked him to stop talking about all the "buts" and to please schedule the surgery. It was done, and I have never again worn a leg iron. Indeed, 6 weeks after recovering from this

last surgery, I was permanently retired with only a 60% disability.

THE EPILOGUE

Obviously, I was given not just life, but a capability for a wonderful quality of life. That quality has included so many additional blessings. My wife and I have thoroughly enjoyed over 32 more years of marriage. We have been truly blessed by two incredibly special children. Our daughter, Dànielle Nicole, was recently awarded a Ph.D. at Michigan Technological University and is currently a tenure-track Assistant Professor at Michigan State University. Our son, Jason James, having graduated Magna cum Laude (and a Phi Beta Kappa) with a BS in Cellular Molecular

Biology from the University of Michigan, is now pursuing a Ph.D. in Immunology at the Stanford University School of Medicine. My wife and I both wonder and dream about the differences they are each making and are going to make in the lives of thousands of people.



"All the parts were still there; they just needed--and received--the healing touch!"

As for me, while working towards my MBA, I also had the opportunity to collaborate on the script for and be featured in the Air Force film *Faces of Rescue*. I have been told this award-winning film was not only the documentary of concerted air rescue and recovery efforts in Southeast Asia, it was also used in PJ training for some 20 years. Personally, I still use it when giving my "civilian" talk and loan it to anyone who shows even the slightest interest in viewing it.

Following the awarding of my MBA, I took a position with Amway Corporation and served there for over 28 years. I also used Veterans' Benefits to obtain both Flight Instructor Airplane and Flight Instructor Instrument pilot ratings. I was given back the capability to teach people to do what I loved so very much. And, in

my "spare" time before job, family, and other obligations precluded being able to take the time, I did just that. Job responsibilities did increase rather quickly as I moved through taking on different roles and performing different tasks with Amway. The culmination of all this work came throughout the 1990s when I worked in an area called New Market Development. While I worked in this exciting new department, I had the huge good fortune to be able to personally start seven new affiliate companies in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Greece, and Romania. I lived in most of these countries for over one year each and had the privilege of getting to know their people, their cultures, their customs, and their lands.

Since the early development, the companies started have generated well over one billion dollars in sales. Over six hundred million of those dollars have gone right back into the hands of individuals who, mostly, had not dared even dream of starting their own businesses and earning that kind of money just years before, while they lived behind the Iron Curtain. My years with New Market Development also provided the opportunity for me to return to Southeast Asia. Ironically, I stepped off an airplane in Hanoi to start researching company-starting possibilities in Vietnam shortly after celebrating my 50th birthday. Unbelievably, when I checked a cal-

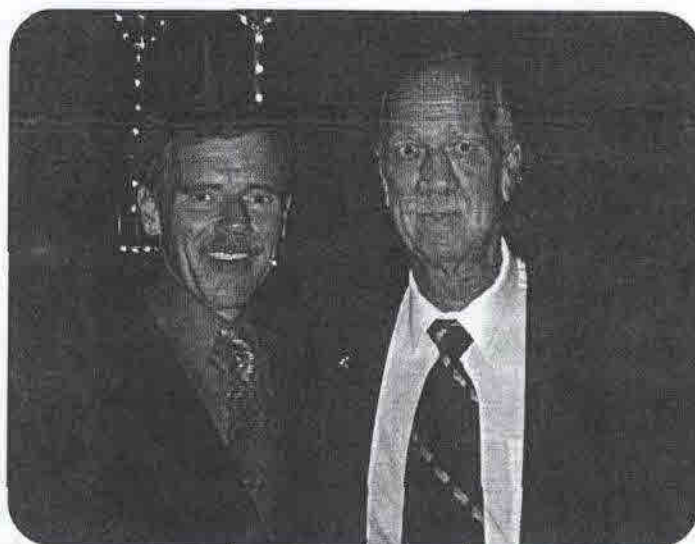
endar while reflecting on being 25 when I was shot down, I confirmed the day I stepped off that plane was the day on which I had lived exactly as long after my shoot-down as before.

To note just one more phenomenal life experience, I noted earlier that I missed the end-of-tour celebration for the PJ who initially dropped from the Jolly to assess my condition on the June day in 1969 when I was shot down. On December 10, 2001, after I told my story before an audience for perhaps the 200th time, Tony Willis came on stage. I had the chance to meet and again thank this phenomenal individual who plucked my butt out of the jungle. In the midst of the hugging that ensued, Tony said to me, "Man, I'm a PJ, I can't cry!" I told him "Tony, I'm a steely eyed fighter pilot; I'll cry for both of us!" Tony later told me he had personally rescued ten downed pilots, and I was the first he had ever met again. What an incredible thrill - and honor - for me.

Truly, it has been an incredible life. I have looked forward to every sunrise and enjoyed every sunset. And, I look forward to many, many more. America, in general, and all of you reading this in particular, thank YOU for my everything!

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my daughter, Dànielle, for assisting with the editing of this piece and helping to prepare it for submission.



"Isn't it wonderful that I can grow old
thanks to the gentleman next to me!
And to so many others!!"

Jim DeVoss (left) with Lorenzo Willis (right)
Photo courtesy of MSG Samuel R. Rodriguez



In December, the SOF medics met at the Special Operations Medical Association (SOMA) Conference, and again it was an opportunity to meet old friends and colleagues. We gained new insights, saw new technologies and shared experiences. It was a great success and will continue into the future.

One of the highlights of the conference was the address by 1Lt (ret) James DeVoss from Grand Rapids, Michigan entitled "Thanks For My Everything." He is an old friend from my undergraduate college days who went off to "fly jets" when I went off to Medical School. He joined the USAF and ultimately was assigned to Vietnam as an F-105 pilot (an aircraft affectionately called The Thud). In June 1969, while flying over North Vietnam his aircraft was hit by ground fire and disabled. Lt DeVoss had to "punch out" at a speed in excess of 600 mph. His injuries at this speed were multiple and significant as you can imagine. His left arm was severely fractured and dislocated behind his torso such that he wasn't sure he retained it through the ejection sequence. The windblast broke and severely dislocated his knees and lower legs rendering them useless. His parachute carried him into a bamboo patch and his torso and extremities were impaled by it. Once conscious, he found his right hand and arm to be functional and all the training he had was recalled, allowing him to key his survival radio and summon help.

In those days, America dedicated a task-force capability to the recovery of our pilots. The pilots flew close to the "edge of the envelope" knowing that this dedicated force was there to bring them home. On this day, the "King-Bird", the "Sandies", the "FACs" and the "Jolly Green Giants" showed up for him like they had for so many others. The team cleared the area, the helicopter found him and the PJs deployed down the hoist to get him. They recovered him, rendered necessary aid, put him in the recovery basket, hoisted him aboard the helicopter and took him to the care he required. Once back at the base he was handed over to the hospital folks. The rescue folks then went to ready themselves for the next "Save".

After months of medical care, multiple operations, numerous hospitals from Vietnam, through Clark AFB to CONUS and ultimately back home, Lt DeVoss' focus was to try walking again and to learn how to use his injured arm with a goal to return to flying and his USAF career. Within the next 5 years he was successful in getting on his feet and out of the leg braces and back to a reasonably normal life. It became apparent though, that his medical retirement would be permanent and so he went about readjusting to civilian life. He completed his Masters Degree and has enjoyed a very successful career.

In the past 30 years he also was a motivational speaker to literally thousands of folks. He told them his story of flying, his rescue, and all the folks along that chain of events who dedicated themselves to his preservation and life—from the flying instructors, the SERE instructors, the aircraft and crews of his rescue, the PJs who hoisted him out of the jungle, the medical technicians, the doctors, the nurses, the VA folks and all those along the way that brought him back and gave him back his life. On this day at SOMA he was able, for the first time, to address folks that are descendents of the rescue tradition and his thanks were sincere, from the heart and touching. He thanked us for his marriage of over 30 years, for his two children and for all his successes. His oldest child is a Ph.D. Professor at Michigan State University and his youngest is finishing his Ph.D. in Immunology at Stanford University.

His one regret was that he had tried in vain to find any of the crewmembers who engineered that save in 1969. He tried for years without success. So, he relished the idea of thanking us in the audience in their place, for we too were dedicated to the motto "That Others May Live." Little known to him, we had checked with the "PJ Mafia" and asked if we could find anyone from that rescue. They responded with success and we smuggled into the meeting TSgt (ret) Lorenzo Willis from Satellite Beach, Florida. After Mr. DeVoss finished, we

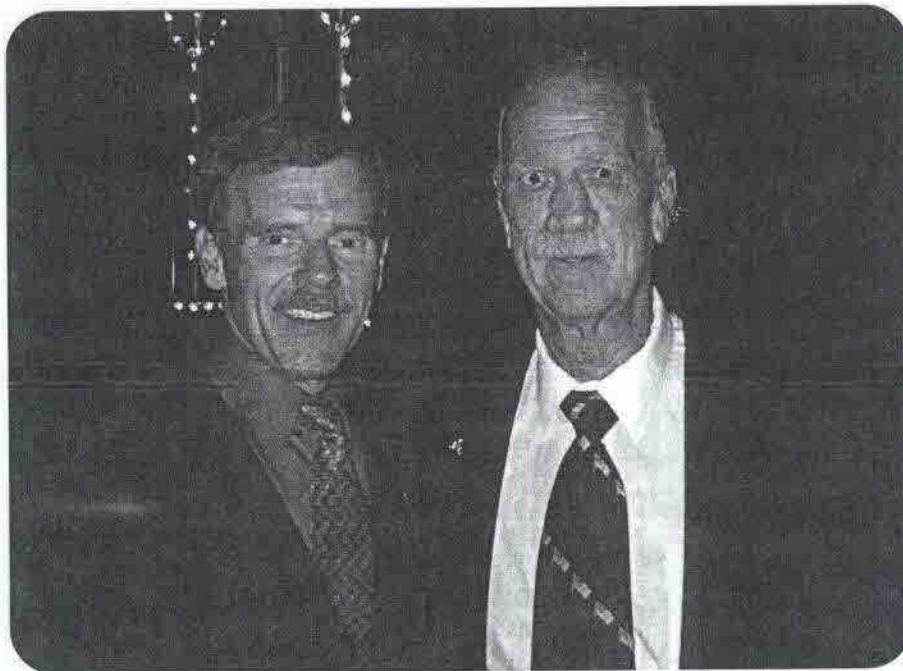
pointed out the real issues of rescues, for the true rewards of a rescue are often lost in the preparation and reconstitution for the next rescue. The ramifications from each rescue are far-reaching and significant. This family and all their accomplishments to date, and in the future with these children, is the legacy of the rescue—it is much more than a “Save”.

We then asked if TSgt Willis was in the room, and he stood to be recognized. When asked if he was the guy who came down the hoist and got this pilot out of the bamboo he replied, “Yes sir, I am”. These two men immediately recognized each other even though they hadn’t looked into each other’s face since June 1969. The reunion was magnificent! TSgt Willis retired in 1973 from the USAF

and had settled here in Florida. He remembered the rescue well as it was one of his last, and he described in detail the state of the injured pilot and his concerns for his rescue.

So, the meeting is over, the emotion of the moment is calmed, and we have all scattered back to our lives and our jobs. However, we are all better for the efforts of our colleagues and predecessors—the pilots and the rescuers. The successes of the DeVoss children that we will benefit from come from the efforts of SOF operators well before us. And just to put “frosting on the cake”, we just got a note from TSgt Willis, THE RESCUER—it says “Thanks for the best day of my life”—go figure! God Bless America!

David L. Hammer



“Isn’t it wonderful that I can grow old thanks to the gentleman next to me! And to so many others!!”

Jim DeVoss with Lorenzo Willis

Photo courtesy of MSG Samuel R. Rodriguez

Robert LaPointe

From: Jim_DeVoss@alticor.com
Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2002 10:11 AM
To: rlapointe@gci.net
Subject: KINGFISH 01 HERE

Robert,

My name is Jim DeVoss. I was Kingfish 01 on 16 June 69. Your website displays the article I wrote for the SOCOM Journal after addressing the SOMA Annual Conference last December.

At that Conference I was "re-introduced" to Tsgt Lorenzo - Tony - Willis. He was the first crewmember of Jolly Green 71 I had met since 69. Tried, but relearned that "1/Lts can't do much, and 1/Lts can't do anything from hospital beds - or after being medically retired".

Anyway, the mission report from Tony - and duplicated on your site - gave me name, rank and serial number of all other crewmembers.

I am communicating with you to find out if you have or know where I can get current contact information for the below:

Major William B. Lehman,
Capt James P. O'Pry,
TSgt Howard N. Lord,
A1C Ronald F. Sopata,
A1C Timothy J. Wonk,

Any information or direction you might be able to provide would be deeply appreciated.

Thanks, in advance,
Jim.

Jim DeVoss, 1/Lt, USAF - Retired
F105 Strike Pilot.